

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

**Testimony of Speaker of the House Christopher G. Donovan
To the Energy and Technology Committee in support of HB 5465,
An Act Concerning the Development of Green Jobs
March 9, 2010**

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, and members of the Energy and Technology committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my strong support of **House Bill 5465, an Act Concerning the Development of Green Jobs**. There can be no doubt that green jobs are, in many ways, the jobs of the future. Last year, the federal government took historic steps to fund the development and conservation of green jobs. In light of this massive influx of available funding, rapidly evolving technological and certification standards, Connecticut's myriad training programs, and the need for rapid and sustainable economic growth, I convened a Green Jobs Panel to review current efforts in Connecticut related to green jobs and to make recommendations for potential legislative action. The bill before us today contains many of these recommendations.

The question, then, becomes this: "*Why green jobs?*" The answer is simple. In order to put Connecticut back to work, we must position ourselves on the cutting edge of this emerging field. And by all accounts, the demand for qualified, appropriately-trained green jobs professionals is only increasing. Just last month, I met with three people that, to me, embodied the future of Connecticut's clean-energy economy. The first, a veteran electrician, wanted to begin installing solar panels but lacked the training and certification to do so. The second, an entrepreneur in the field of solar aggregation, lamented the roadblocks he had encountered when trying to finance his ventures. And the third, a representative from a Chinese solar company, was interested in establishing ties to Connecticut.

These three meetings vividly illustrate the vast, largely untapped potential for green jobs-related growth here in Connecticut. However, they also sharply underscored several areas in which Connecticut could do more. For instance, Connecticut also has a highly trained

manufacturing base that could easily transition to building more fuel cells or solar panels. This bill and the other work this committee will undertake addresses these shortcomings.

First, we must be sure to maintain current funding levels for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. Governor Rell's recent proposals to sweep or securitize millions of dollars in funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects cast the future of these programs into doubt; moreover, it had a profound and unsettling effect upon the industry that is critical to growing Connecticut's green economy. Further, we must work to implement innovative financing mechanisms that will make capital readily available at low-interest rates and maximize our ability to access and utilize federal funding for green-collar initiatives. We must also place the highest of priorities on training and workforce development. Working together with our trade schools, community colleges, unions, state agencies, and industry leaders, we can ensure that Connecticut is a hotbed for talented, qualified, and employable green-collar workers – workers that will lead our green economy in years to come. Lastly, Connecticut must coordinate better the on-going activities and opportunities in this area through a coordinating body that acts as a single portal so that investors, residents and students can access information on green opportunities in this state.

On a related note, I would like to express my strong support for An Act Concerning Rate Relief. In the face of the highest electricity rates in the continental United States, Connecticut ratepayers and businesses are in dire need of action on their behalf. By bringing our electric rate system into closer alignment with proven rate-relief best practices from other states, we can take significant steps forward in easing the burden on the individual ratepayer, making Connecticut attractive to businesses, and growing the economy as a whole.

Connecticut is well-positioned to develop a thriving economy in which green jobs and affordable energy play a central role – however, swift action is necessary to realize many of these critical objectives. I urge your support for this important proposal.